

In the Claims:

~~Please amend claim 1 as follows:~~

C₁ 1 . A method of recovering precious metals from a mineral composition prior to separate cyanide leaching, the mineral composition comprising a refractory material, the method comprising milling the composition to a particle size of P_{80} of less than 25 microns and leaching said composition with a solution comprising lime and/or limestone in the presence of an oxygen containing gas, the leaching being initiated under alkaline conditions to form a leached material, and subjecting the leached material to a cyanide leaching step to recover precious metals.